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THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT, by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross (375 pages; Random House; \$5.95).

By Thorpe Menn
(The Star's Book Editor)

A KANSAS CITY official likes to tell about a telephone call he received from an irate citizen who was protesting a program which would cost several million dollars. After listening patiently for a time, the official said: "Let me write you a letter outlining the facts, and then maybe you can see the necessity for this program."

"I'm not interested in facts," the citizen replied.

Facts are indeed bothersome things, especially those which are hard to come by, as in the case of what two authors call "The Invisible Government" of the U. S. A. The visible government—Department of State, White House, Pentagon, etc.—acknowledges no such thing. The visible government is often in the position of denying that the U. S. is doing what the invisible government is doing.

And so, four young women in Birmingham are receiving quite generous checks twice a month. Why? Their husbands, all American fliers, are dead. How were they killed? The visible government denies all knowledge of their deaths. Who then sends the checks? They come from a trust fund. Who set up the trust fund? No one will say.

It seems quite well known that these Americans were killed while flying bombing missions against Cuba for the Bay of Pigs invasion. At least David Wise and Thomas B. Ross are able to quote apparently reliable sources for a factual report on that abysmal adventure, and on subsequent sidelights such as the case of the Birmingham widows.

Wise, chief of the New York Herald Tribune Washington bureau, and Ross of the Chicago Sun-Times Washington bureau were the authors of "The U-2 Affair," which, like "The Invisible Government," brought together all the known facts about that incident but added little that was new.

That, however, is an important part of literature which can be well served by journalists. Scholarly historians do little more. They may dig a little deeper for facts and they may reach more profound conclusions. But no one ever has all the facts. The general public has only a vague recollection of day-by-day news stories and these often are clouded by official denials of facts and official assertions of falsehoods.

And so, some of the best books of current history are written by journalists who sift painstakingly through all the confusing, conflicting day-by-day reports in search of real facts, probable facts and possible facts.

"The Invisible Government" is such a book. The authors have sought out all the published information about the U. S. espionage network. They bring all these together into a unified, dispassionate discussion of a controversial subject about something which is generally known: That American intelligence agencies, particularly the Central Intelligence agency, operate with virtual independence.

CIA is shown to be a vast bureaucracy so institutionalized that no one could dislodge it. The authors show also to how great an extent the CIA has become indeed an invisible government pursuing its own foreign policies—including subversion of, and revolution against, other governments.

This book does not pretend to be an "inside the CIA" type of thing. It simply gathers together what is generally known about CIA operations in Cuba, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Guatemala, Venezuela, Korea, China, Formosa, Iran, Egypt, Costa Rica . . . It is about the incredible U-2 and the even more incredible SAMOS satellites whose cameras

can photograph objects 30 inches wide from a height of 125 miles. It also is about the eight other intelligence agencies, all supervised by the CIA director.

Espionage and subversion are facts of international life. In the words of Allen Dulles, former head of the CIA, we have "to fight fire by fire." In other words, since communism is an international conspiracy, we have to set up our own international conspiracy.

That may be so. But "The Invisible Government" raises serious questions about the extent to which that is so. "The secret intelligence machinery of the government can never be totally reconciled with the traditions of a free republic," say the authors.

They add that "in a time of Cold War, the solution lies not in dismantling this machinery but in bringing it under greater control. The resultant danger of exposure is far less than the danger of secret power." And they conclude with a warning from Thomas Jefferson: "Whatever power in any government is independent, is absolute also."

The power is not yet absolute. CIA secretly subsidizes at least one publisher, some academic institutes and hides behind some private dummy corporations. Nevertheless, two of America's best journalists can write a book exposing America's equivalent of Communist subversion, and one of America's most respected publishing houses can publish that book.